

REMARKS

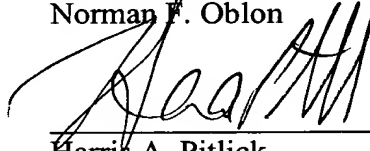
The rejections of all but Claim 49 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully traversed. Indeed, the rejection is now moot in view of the above-discussed amendment. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 53-55 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully traversed. Note that Claim 53 (and Claim 40) have been amended by replacing "thereof" with --of the skin layer--, since step 2 of the process of Claim 53 is drawn to heat treatment of the skin layer. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

All of the presently pending claims in this application are now believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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